

DE CONSOLATIONE PHILOSOPHIE. BOOK III. PROSE I.

Iam cantum illa finierat.

Ed hir she hadde end-
ed hir song, whan the
sweetnesse of hir
ditee hadde thorough-
perced me that was
desirous of herkn-
inge, and I astoned
hadde yit streighte
myn eres, that is to
seyn, to herke the
bet what she wolde seye; so that a litel here-
after I seyde thus: O thou that art sovereyn
comfort of anguissous corages, so thou
hast remounted & norissed me with the
weighte of thy sentences and with delyt of
thy singinge; so that I trowe nat now that
I be unparigal to the strokes of fortune:
as who seyth, I dar wel now suffren al the
assautes of fortune, and wel defende me
fro hir. And tho remedies which that thou
seydest herbiforn weren right sharpe, nat
only that I am nat agrisen of hem now, but
I, desirous of heringe, axe gretely to heren
the remedies.

HAN seyde she thus: That felede
I ful wel, quod she, whan that thou,
ententif & stille, ravisshest my
wordes; and I abood til that thou haddest
swich habite of thy thought as thou hast
now; or elles til that I myself hadde makid
to thee the same habit, which that is a more
verray thing. And certes, the remenaunt of
things that ben yit to seye ben swiche,
that first whan men tasten hem they ben
bytinge, but whan they ben receyved with-
inne a wight, than ben they swete. But for
thou seyest that thou art so desirous to
herkne hem, with how gret brenninge wold-
est thou glowen, yif thou wistest whider
I wol leden thee!

HIDER is that? quod I. To
thilke verray welefulnesse, quod
she, of whiche thyn herte drem-
eth; but for as moche as thy sighte is oc-
cupied and distorted by imaginacioun of
erthly thinges, thou mayst nat yit seen
thilke selve welefulnesse.

DO, quod I, and shewe me what is
thilke verray welefulnesse, I prey-
e thee, withoute taryinge. That
wole I gladly don, quod she, for the cause
of thee; but I wol first marken thee by
wordes and I wol enforcen me to enformen
thee thilke false cause of blisfulnesse that
thou more knowest; so that, whan thou
hast fully biholden thilke false goodes, &
torned thyn eyen to that other syde, thou
mowe knowe the cleernesse of verray blis-
fulnesse.

Metre I.

Qui serere ingenuum volet agrum.

WOSO wole so wea feed plen-
tivous, lat him first delivere
it fro thornes, and herve a-
sunder with his hook the
bussches & the fern, so that
the corn may comen hevvy of
yif mouthes han first tasted savoures that
ben wikkid. The sterres shynen more a-
greably whan the wind Nothus leteth his
ploungy blast; & after that Lucifer his
day, sterre hath chased away the derke
night, the day the fairere ledeth the derke
hors of the sonne. And right so thou, bi-
holdinge first the false goodes, bigin to
withdrawen thynekke fro the yok of erthly
affeccions; and afterward the verray
goodes shollen entren into thy corage.

Prose II.

Tunc defixo paululum visu.

HO fastnede she a
litel the sighte of
hir eyen, and with-
drow hir right as it
were into the streite
sete of hir thought;
and bigan to speke
right thus: Alle the
cures, quod she, of
mortal folk, whiche
that travaylen hem in many maner studies,
goon certes by diverse weyes, but natheles
they enforcen hem alle to comen only to
oon ende of blisfulnesse. And blisful-
nesse is swiche a good, that whoso that
hath geten it, he ne may, over that, nothing
more desyre. And this thing is forsothe
the sovereyn good that conteyneth in him-
self alle maner goodes; to the whiche good
yif ther failede any thing, it might nat ben
cleped sovereyn good: for thanne were ther
som good, out of this ilke sovereyn good,
that mighte ben desired. Now is it cleer and
certein thanne, that blisfulnesse is a parfit
estat by the congregacioun of alle goodes:
the whiche blisfulnesse, as I have seyd, alle
mortal folk enforcen hem to geten by di-
verse weyes, for why the covetise of verray
good is naturelly yplanted in the hertes
of men; but the miswandringe errour mis-
ledeth hem into false goodes. Of the whiche
men, som of hem wenen that sovereyn good
be to liven withoute nede of any thing, and
travaylen hem to be haboundant of rich-
esses. And som other men demen that so-
vereyn good be, for to ben right digne of re-
verence; & enforcen hem to ben reverenced

among hir neighbours by the honours that
they han ygeten. And some folk ther ben
that holden, that right heigh power besow-
er good, & enforcen hem for to regnen,
or elles to joynen hem to hem that regnen.
And it semeth to some other folk, that
noblesse of renoun be the sovereyn good;
and hasten hem to geten glorious name by
the arts of werre and of pees. And many
folk mesuren and gessen that sovereyn
good be joye and gladnesse, & wenen that
it be right blisful thing to ploungen hem in
voluptuous delyt. And ther ben folk that
entrechaungen the causes and the endes of
these forseyde goodes, as they that desiren
richesses to han power & delytes; or elles
they desiren power for to han moneye, or
for cause of renoun. In these thinges, and
in swiche othere thinges, is torned alle the
entencioun of desiringes and of werkes of
men; as thus: noblesse and favour of peo-
ple, whiche that yeveth to men, as it semeth
hem, a maner cleernesse of renoun; & wyf
and children, that men desiren for cause of
delyt and of merinesse. But forsothe,
frendes ne sholden nat be rekned among
the goodes of fortune, but of vertu; for it
is a ful holy maner thing. Alle these othere
thinges, forsothe, ben taken for cause of
power or elles for cause of delyt.

CERTES, now am I redy to referren
the goodes of the body to these for-
seyde thinges aboven; for it semeth
that strengthe & gretnesse of body yeven
power and worthinesse, and that beautee
and swiftnesse yeven noblesse & glorie
of renoun; and hele of body semeth yeven
delyt. In alle these thinges it semeth only
that blisfulnesse is desired, for why thilke
thing that every man desireth most over
alle thinges, he demeth that it be the sove-
reyn good; but I have defyned that blisful-
nesse is the sovereyn good; for which every
wight demeth, that thilke estat that he de-
sireth over alle thinges, that it be blisful-
nesse.

Now hast thou thanne biforn thyn
eyen almost al the purposed forme
of the welefulnesse of mankinde,
that is to seyn, riches, honours, power,
and glorie, and delyts. The whiche delyt
only considerede Epicurus, and juged and
establisshed that delyt is the sovereyn
good; for as moche as alle othere thinges,
as him thoughte, birefte away joye & mirthe
fram the herte. But I retorne ayein to the
studies of men, of whiche men the corage
alwey rehereth and seketh the sovereyn
good, al be it so that it be with a derked
memorie; but be not by whiche path, right
as a drunken man not nat by whiche path
he may retorne him to his hous. Semeth
it thanne that folk folyn and erren that
enforcen hem to have nede of nothing?

Certes, thern is non other thing that may so
wel performe blisfulnesse, as an estat plen-
tivous of alle goodes, that ne hath nede of
non other thing, but that is suffisaunt of
himself unto himself. And folyn swiche
folk thanne, that wenen that thilke thing
that is right good, that it be eek right wor-
thy of honour & of reverence? Certes, nay,
for that thing is neither foul ne worthy to
ben despised, that wel neigh al the enten-
cioun of mortal folk travaylen for to geten
it. And power, oughte nat that eek to ben
rekened amonges goodes? What elles? for
it is nat to wene that thilke thing, that is
most worthy of alle thinges, be feble and
withoute strengthe. And cleernesse of re-
noun, oughte that to ben despised? Certes,
ther may no man forsake, that al thing that
is right excellent and noble, that it ne sem-
eth to ben right cleer and renommed. For
certes, it nedeth nat to seye, that blisful-
nesse be nat anguissous ne drery, ne sub-
git to grevaunces ne to sorwes, sin that in
right litel thinges folk seken to have and to
usen that may delyten hem. Certes, these
ben the thinges that men wolen & desiren
to geten. And for this cause desiren they
richesses, dignitees, regnes, glorie, and
delices, for therby wenen they to han suf-
fisaunce, honour, power, renoun, and glad-
nesse. Than is it good, that men seken thus
by so many diverse studies. In whiche de-
syre it may lightly ben shewed how gret is
the strengthe of nature; for how so that
men han diverse sentences and discord-
inge, algates men acorden alle in lovinge the
ende of good.

Metre II.

Quantas rerum flectat habenas.

Tlyketh me to shewe, by sub-
til song, with slakke and de-
litableness of strenges, how
that Nature, mighty, enclin-
eth and flitteth the governe-
ments of thinges, and by
whiche lawes she, purveyable, kepeth the
grete world; & how she, bindinge, restrey-
neth alle thinges by a bonde that may nat
ben unbounde. Al be it so that the lyouns
of the contre of Pene beren the faire
chaynes, and taken metes of the handes
of folk that yeven it hem, and dreden hir
sturdy maystres of whiche they ben wont
to suffren betinges; yif that hir horrible
mouthes ben bebled, that is to seyn, of
bestes devoured, hir corage of time pass-
ed, that hath ben ydel & rested, repey-
reth ayein; and they roren grevously and re-
membren on hir nature, & slaken hir nekkes
fram hir chaynes unbounde; and hir may-
ster, first totorn with bloody tooth, assayeth
the wode wrathes of hem; this is to seyn,
they freten hir mayster. And the jangel-

Boethius de
Consolatione
Philosophie.
Book III.